

**Ambassador D. Brent Hardt**  
**Remarks on the Occasion of American Independence Day**  
**July 2, 2013**  
**Chief of Mission Residence, Georgetown, Guyana**

Your Excellency President Donald Ramotar,  
Honorable Prime Minister Samuel Hinds,  
Speaker of the National Assembly Raphael Trotman  
Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett  
Other Honorable Ministers,  
Leader of the Opposition, David Granger  
Other Members of Parliament,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Members of the Media,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Happy 237<sup>th</sup> Independence Day! Mrs. Hardt and I are delighted that you have joined us this evening to celebrate America's Independence Day. We especially thank you for partaking in the spirit of this festive evening celebrating the Great American West and the sense of independence, adventure, and determination it symbolizes for our country.

We are celebrating two days early this year to avoid conflict with CARICOM's upcoming 40th anniversary celebration on July 4th, but July 2nd is actually the date on which delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia decided to take the fateful step toward independence in a hotly debated vote in which John Adams' passionate advocacy carried the day. So we are on solid historical ground celebrating tonight.

I would at the outset like to recognize our many sponsors who helped make tonight's celebration possible. These American companies who have invested in Guyana and Guyanese companies who represent American business reflect the best of public-private partnerships. We appreciate your generosity and presence in Guyana.

July 4, 1776 stands as a symbol to Americans and to many people worldwide of the ideals of liberty, freedom, and independence that inspired the birth of our country and nourished independence aspirations in many other

countries. We are reminded of the indomitable spirit that led an outmatched, outgunned, and ragtag militia to stand up to the imposing Redcoats at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. And we are reminded how unlikely it was that our American experiment would succeed at all -- that a small band of courageous patriots could declare independence from a powerful empire to form what the old world had never known -- a government of, by, and for the people.

Since that improbable start, it has been this unyielding spirit of independence and liberty that has defined us as Americans -- to ourselves and to the world. That same spirit led generations of American pioneers to blaze a westward trail across the vast and often perilous North American continent. It has inspired us, as a nation, not to wilt or cower in the face of difficulties, but to overcome trials and rise to challenges, understanding that each of us has a hand in writing our country's story. It is this spirit that we wanted to celebrate tonight through our theme: the Great American West. As American author of western novels Louis L'Amour said, "There's a little cowboy in all of us, a little frontier."

Guyana has its own version of the Great American West. Every year, Lethem celebrates a lively Rupununi Rodeo show, with wild horseback riding, bull riding, cow milking, cattle roping, and even greasy pig catching. Guyana also has a gold rush of its own. More and more mining companies and individual 'porkknockers' are drawn to the promise of Guyanese gold hidden in the lush interior of the country. Both Guyana and the U.S. have diverse indigenous populations with long histories and cultural traditions that enrich our nations. And, we both have vast land areas with breathtaking views and unspoiled nature: Yellowstone and Iwokrama, Yosemite and Kaitum, the Grand Canyon and the Pakarimas.

Looking back since last July 4, relations between the United States and Guyana and the U.S. and the Caribbean Community have never been closer or more dynamic. When I arrived in Guyana, I emphasized that the United States' goal was to work as a close partner to help build a secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic Guyana and Caribbean Community. Working with the governments and people of the region, we have accomplished much; with continued mutual support, we can accomplish even more.

Just last month Vice President Biden met with President Ramotar and other CARICOM Heads of State in Trinidad for a wide-ranging discussion to explore avenues for closer collaboration. In February, Attorney General Holder discussed regional security challenges and opportunities for closer law enforcement

cooperation with Caribbean Heads. Indeed, we continue to deepen our extraordinary security and law enforcement cooperation with Guyana and the entire Caribbean region through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

In Guyana through CBSI, DEA trainers conducted a Counternarcotics Investigators course for Guyana's anti-narcotics units. We are boosting the capabilities and effectiveness of police and customs units at ports of entry. We coordinated a Financial Crimes Stakeholder Meeting in April to enhance cooperation against money launderers. In the months ahead, we will be delivering three patrol vessels to the Guyana Defense Force to enhance counter-narcotics and anti-piracy capabilities.

To address the root causes of crime and violence, we continue to expand our innovative employment, education, and skill-building, and re-integration opportunities for at-risk youth through USAID's SKYE project, which has trained over 300 young people, leading to employment for 90 youths and alternative sentencing for over 20 young people.

To strengthen our economic ties, Guyana and the United States concluded an Open Skies aviation agreement. Major U.S. oil and gas exploration deals were reached with U.S. companies, and we continued joint work to strengthen Guyana's capacity to manage its emerging energy sector. Last week, we partnered with international and domestic groups and businesses to support an Investment Conference to help attract even more international investment to Guyana.

Building on a decade of extraordinary PEPFAR partnership, we continue to work together to strengthen the delivery of public health services and defeat the scourge of HIV and AIDS. This year, we opened the Ministry of Health's state-of-the-art warehouse for the Materials Management Unit, which significantly boosts Guyana's storage and distribution capacity for essential drugs.

Building on our close people-to-people connections, the United States continued to reach out to support vulnerable and marginalized populations. We held a media sensitization workshop to build greater awareness of and respect for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights. We continued our work with government and civil society to raise awareness of and combat domestic violence. We supported female empowerment by promoting women's entrepreneurship. We worked with stakeholders across Guyana to continue strengthening the capacity to combat trafficking in persons. We were truly thrilled that one of Guyana's own, Simona Broomes of the Guyana Women Miners Organization, was honored by

Secretary of State John Kerry as a 2013 TIP heroine for her bravery and tireless efforts to address human trafficking in Guyana. All of Guyana should be proud of what this courageous Guyanese woman has done to protect some of the most vulnerable people in this country.

Building on our decades-long engagement in support of democracy and governance in Guyana, we embarked on a new USAID program designed to help strengthen the critical work of the National Assembly, support local government elections, and boost youth involvement in the political process.

At the start of 2013, we joined with other diplomatic missions in expressing our confidence that this would be the year in which Guyana would move forward to ensure that its citizens benefit from strong and effective local governance to build safer, more prosperous, and more democratic communities. It is a positive sign for Guyana that the parliamentary Select Committee on Local Governance has forged agreement on four bills to establish a renewed system of local governance. We were pleased to join with ten Guyanese civic partners and other diplomatic missions to encourage the National Assembly to build on this progress and goodwill and complete the legislation in the coming days so that preparations for local government elections can begin in earnest.

Finally, I would like to touch on a program near and dear to my heart. Through our *Guyana Shines* initiative, we joined with an ever growing number of partners and schools to reduce littering, protect the environment, and restore Georgetown's beauty. With the help of our local partners, we have been able to take the anti-littering message to every school in Georgetown. We are thrilled to see the expanding government and civic efforts to tackle this challenge head-on. I remain convinced that restoring Guyana's Shine can be a transformative event -- as it was in the U.S. -- that will open new doors for investment, tourism, and national pride.

So as you see, the U.S.-Guyana relationship and the U.S.-CARICOM relationship are extraordinarily broad and rich. I thank you, Your Excellency, and Foreign Minister Rodrigues-Birkett, as well as Secretary General LaRocque and his CARICOM team for your friendship and collaboration in working together to build a safer, more prosperous, healthier, and more inclusive Guyana and Caribbean region. The United States of America is proud to be a close partner and friend of Guyana and of the entire CARICOM region.